



# NEWS RELEASE

# UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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## **SERGEANT HONORED WITH COMMAND PROMOTION**

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. – Master Sgt. James Cabezas said he was considering retirement for his upcoming 20-year mark of service. While readying his paperwork, he was informed that he was selected as one of two command-level master sergeant STRIPES for Exceptional Performers (STEP) promotions recipients. Now, though he has signed up for a standard two-year service extension, he plans to stick around even longer.

Eighteen years ago, Cabezas said he was planning to join the Marine Corps. His uncle, a former airman, helped him change his mind, and he enlisted in the Air Force.

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## **SERGEANT HONORED WITH COMMAND PROMOTION –2**

“When I was an Airman, I made the 20-year commitment. I knew then that I would go career. This promotion gives me the opportunity to teach the young folks coming in to persevere, to keep up the Air Force core values and keep faith that the system does work. Gen. Bowlds and Gen. Carlson changed my life,” said Cabezas.

In a ceremony June 1, Cabezas was honored with the “tacking on” of his new stripes by Air Force Research Laboratory Commander, Maj. Gen. Ted F. Bowlds, and Phillips Research Site (PRS) Superintendent, Chief Master Sgt. Larry K. Brenden.

Cabezas works as the operations superintendent of the Air Force Research Laboratory’s Tactical Laser Systems branch within the Directed Energy Directorate. His supervisor, Col. Kirk Kloeppel, nominated him for the promotion, citing his outstanding performance in the branch.

“Master Sgt. James Cabezas is the best noncommissioned officer I have worked with in my 22-year career. His record stands on its own as a number-one operational communicator, Air Force Material Command (AFMC) noncommissioned officer of the year. He has kept my branch running in top shape from laser safety, logistics, tool control and software management. He consistently has a positive attitude and is an outstanding role model for our enlisted troops,” said Kloeppel.

The STEP Program, begun in 1980, provides commanders the opportunity to promote a limited number of airmen with exceptional potential to the grades of staff sergeant through master sergeant. The promotion was awarded to two tech. sgts. in the command by AFMC Commander Gen. Bruce Carlson. All of the command organizations and laboratory directorates were eligible to nominate an individual, but only two were awarded the honor.

When not at work managing and supporting the resources, logistics and personnel at seven laboratories within his branch, he has logged over 400 hours coaching his son’s little league baseball team.

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## **SERGEANT HONORED WITH COMMAND PROMOTION –2**

“I told my son that as long as he would play, I would coach,” said Cabezas.

In addition to serving his community off-base, Cabezas is also active in Kirtland Airmen Against Drunk Driving, an organization that offers safe rides and teaches the dangers of alcohol to Kirtland’s airmen.

As the PRS Enlisted Association Treasurer, Cabezas works closely with the site’s enlisted members, and Chief Master Sgt. Brenden.

“Master Sgt. Cabezas’ dedication and performance over the past 19 years of service to country is what earned him this STEP promotion,” said Brenden. “His pride-in-professionalism and involvement with unit, base and community events serves as a shining example for all of us here in AFRL. Whether it’s within our unit’s enlisted association or a base-wide event, I can always count on James to make it happen. The future of our air force is in great hands with folks like Master Sgt Cabezas leading the charge.”

Cabezas stressed that the key to promotion and advancement in the Air Force ranks is to stay competitive and maintain the “whole person” concept. He said he made sure over the years that he stayed competitive and kept his priority as mission-first.

Given the magnitude of the honor of the promotion, it seems the effort paid off.

- AFRL -